1:Indiana U. S-4, 5(1954-5)1955 RG4 Estonia RG4

666 only Communists remained, appointed by the "Working People's Union." The entire organization of these elections was a gross violation of the Estonian Electoral Law of 1937. The people were forced to the polling stations and the only way they could show their opposition was by spoiling their ballots. The percentage of spoilt ballots was probably much higher than the 7.2 per cent which the Communists announced.

648 642 The next act of the Estonian tragedy was the incorporation of Estonia into the Soviet Union. The same illegally elected, solely Communist House of Representatives approved at its first session, July 22, three acts of the utmost importance: first, that Estonia become a Soviet Republic; second, to ask the Supreme Soviet of the USSR to admit Estonia into the Soviet Union; [471] and third, the nationalization of all banks, all land and all large industrial enterprises.

642 The leader of the sovietization of Estonia during the first Soviet Occupation was Andrey Zhdanov, a member of the Political Bureau and of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. A new Communist puppet government was appointed, with Johannes Vares, a physician and left-wing poet, as Premier. President K. Päts remained formally in office for a while, although he was actually a prisoner of [701] the occupation authorities. General Laidoner was relieved of his duties as Commander-in-Chief.[1] The Estonian Defense Union was dissolved and all its arms surrendered. In addition, almost all private organizations were • 666 [646] liquidated. The Communists speeded up the elections of a new House of Representatives, which were held on July 14-15, 1940. Although non-Communist candidates were also allowed at first, these were later all withdrawn and

1/ [In 1940, see Cat. 116, pp. -61-52-, 57-61 -- Analyst.]

665 668 constitutional crisis in the 1930 s. The VABS League developed into an extreme right-wing party which had great political ambitions, but which was rather short-lived. Isamaa Liit (Patriotic League) was founded by K. Päts in February, 1935, at a time when the activities of the political parties were banned. It gave popular support to the government and assisted with the forth-coming referendum and election of the National Assembly.

666 The election of the Parliament, or Riigikogu, were the most important in Estonia. The Riigikogu was based on proportional representation, and elections were carried out under direct, universal, equal and secret suffrage. According to the First Estonian Constitution, the procedure of elections was as follows: the political parties nominated their candidates and printed the lists

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666 of candidates together with their party programs. Secret ballots were guaranteed and the counting of votes was carried out under the supervision of representatives of all parties. Participation in elections was urged, but was free. No one was excluded from voting except certain criminals and mentally ill persons, and those who had been citizens for less than three years. The percentage of actual participation varied as in all free and democratic countries. The right to vote began at the age of 20, according to the Constitution of 1937 at the age of 22. Elections, according to the 1937 Constitution, were more complex.

The Soviet rule introduced a one-party system in Estonia and made a mockery of elections. The elections in July, 1941, for the House of Representatives under the First Soviet

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666 Occupation were organized by an unlawfully composed Electoral Committee and in open violation of the Estonian Electoral Law of 1937. (See also Subparagraph 1b, HISTORICAL SETTING, pp. 31-32).[1] Non-Communist candidates were all forced to withdraw and were proclaimed "enemies of the working people." Many agitators drove around on election day blackmailing and intimidating in order to force the people to the polling stations, where they were guarded by numerous militia and secret policemen, who followed the voting closely. These measures made it extremely difficult to spoil the ballots. There is no way to check the Communist claims that in these elections 84.1 per cent of the electorate voted and that only 7.2 per cent of the votes were spoiled. In the Communist archives left in Estonia after the first occupation, it was

[1 LSEE cat. 116

-- Analyst]

1;Indiana U. S-4, 5(1954-5)1955 RG4 Estonia RG4

found that the Central Electoral Committee alone had forged 35,119 votes, but no evidence was left of forgeries by the District Electoral Committees. Sick people or those who pretended illness, were visited in their homes by agitators and forced to cast their ballots under the eyes of the Communists. By such methods, secrecy of balloting and accuracy of counting were not guaranteed nor were the elections free. In later elections the Communists have achieved an extremely high percentage of participation by an even more effective coercive and controlling system. They announced that in the elections of the Supreme Soviet of the Estonian SSR in February, 1955, participation of the electorate was 99.81 per cent. The candidates were nominated by "the National Block of Communists and Non-Communists." Of the 125 elected delegates,

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666 only 31 seem to be native Estonians, if one may judge by their names. The rest are Russians or citizens of the Soviet Union of Estonian extraction. In these elections one delegate for each 10,000 inhabitants was elected. Accordingly, [16] the population of Estonia should be now 1,250,000, since 125 delegates were elected. The increase in population, as compared with the data for 1951, is 100,000. This increase is the result mainly of the import of Russians into Tallinn and the oil-shale mining district of Virumaa.

665 The number of members in the Communist Party in Estonia is not high, that is, it is about the same as in Russia proper. Increases in the number are due mainly to Russian officials brought into Estonian for political purposes.

5:Amer. Russ. Inst. (no date) 1950 RG4 Estonia RG4

[Estonian Constitution as of November, 1947]

000 ...ge - is punishable with all the severity of the law as the most heinous ... crimes.

Chapter IX. The Electoral System

166 Art. 106. Members of all Soviets of Working People's Deputies - of the Supreme Soviet of the Estonian SSR and of the district, city, volost, settlement and village Soviets of Working People's Deputies - are chosen by the electors on the basis of universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot.

Art. 107. Elections of deputies are universal: all citizens of the Estonian SSR who have reached the age of eighteen, irrespective of race or nationality, sex, religion, education, domicile, social origin, property status or past activities, have the right to vote in the election of deputies and to be elected, with the exception of insane persons and persons who have been convicted by a court of law and whose sentences include deprivation of electoral rights.

[641] Every citizen of the Estonian SSR who has reached the age of twenty-one is eligible for election to the Supreme Soviet of the Estonian SSR, irrespective of race, nationality, sex, religion, education, domicile, social origin, property status or past activities.

Art. 108. Elections of deputies are equal: each citizen has one vote; all citizens participate in elections on an equal footing.

[562] Art. 109. Women have the right to elect and be elected on equal terms with men.

Art. 110. Citizens serving in the Red Army have the right to elect and be elected on equal terms with all other citizens.

Art. 111. Elections of deputies are direct: all Soviets of Working People's Deputies, from village and city Soviets of Working People's Deputies to the Supreme Soviet of the Estonian SSR are elected by the citizens by a direct vote.

Art. 112. Voting at elections of deputies is secret.

Art. 113. Candidates are nominated by election districts.

The right to nominate candidates is secured to public organizations and societies of the working people: Communist Party organizations, trade unions, cooperatives, youth organizations and cultural societies.

Art. 114. It is the duty of every deputy to report to his electors on his work and on the work of his Soviet of Working People's Deputies, and he may be recalled at any time upon decision of a majority of the electors in the manner established by law.

Art. 115. Elections to the Soviets of Working People's Deputies of the Estonian SSR are held by election districts on the basis of representation fixed by the Ordinance Concerning Elections to Soviets of Working People's Deputies of the Estonian SSR.